Claims

1. A computer system (999), the system having a central
    computer (900) and at least one peripheral computer

5   (901/902) for executing at least one business application
        (201/202), the peripheral computer further issuing an alert
        message (211/212) when a current value of a predetermined
        variable in the business application is in a predetermined
        relation to a reference value, the central computer for

10   receiving the alert message and, according to a predefined
        type of the alert message, for forwarding a notification
        message (301) to communication devices (903, 904, 905) that
        present a representation of the notification message to a
        predefined group of users (1, 2, 3);

15   in the computer system, the central computer issuing a
        further notification message (321) to a further user (4)
        outside the group in the event that during a predetermined
        time period no user of the predefined group has confirmed
        reception of the notification,

20   the computer system characterized in that
        the predefined group of users is determined from a message
        distribution list (140) that is derived from a role-to-user
        assignment and/or from an application-to-role assignment,
        wherein the assignments define the business application

25   that each user is allowed to access.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein the communication device
    (e.g., device 905) - when instructed by the user - returns
    a receipt message (315) to the central computer (900).

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3. The system of claim 2, wherein the communication device (903-904) is a device selected from a group comprising: fax machine, voice mail system, selective call receiver, a mobile phone with an SMS receiver, an audio device, a text-to-voice converter with a speaker, personal computer with electronic mail.

4. The system of claim 2, wherein the communication device presents the representation visually (953, 954, 955) or audible.

5. The system of claim 4, wherein the communication device runs a browser program.

6. The system of claim 5, wherein the communication device presents the representation as a hyperlink (301-1) to a full version of the notification message.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the central computer is implemented as a workplace application server (900') by that the users of the group interact with applications running on the at least one peripheral computer (901/902).

8. The system of claim 7, wherein the workplace application server (900') adds a follow-up suggestion (301-2) to the notification message, the description being selected from a look-up table.

9. The system of claim 1, wherein the central computer (900) assigns a unique identification number to the notification message, and wherein the communication device returns the identification number as part of the receipt message.

10. The system of claim 9, wherein the communication device (903-905) also returns a user identification to the central computer (900).

5   11. The system of claim 10 wherein the central computer (900) stores the user identification.

12. The system of claim 1, wherein the further notification message has a descriptive portion (321-1) to indicate being 10   the further notification.

13. The system of claim 1, wherein the notification message comprises predefined text portions (301-3, 301-4).

15   14. The system of claim 1, wherein the notification message comprises dynamically adapted text portions (301-3, 301-4) that relate to the business application (201) where the current value of the variable of the predetermined variable is in the predetermined relation to the reference value.

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15. An alert notification method (400) for a central computer
    (900), the method comprising the following steps:
    deriving (401) a group of users (1, 2, 3) from a role-to-
        user assignment and/or from an application-to-role
5   assignment, the assignment defining at least one
        business application that each user is allowed to
        access;
    storing (402) representations of the group of users (1, 2,
        3) in a message distribution list (140) and to receive
10   (403) subscription requests to alert notification
        messages from the users of the group;
    receiving (420) an alert message (211/212) by the central
        computer (900), the alert message issued (410) by at
        least one peripheral computer (901/902) that executes
15   the business application and that detects that a
        current value of a predetermined variable in the
        business application is in a predetermined relation to
        a reference value;
    forwarding (430) a notification message (301) to a
20   plurality of communication devices (903, 904, 905) that
        present (440) a representation of the notification to
        the group of users (1, 2, 3); and
    issuing (460) a further notification message to a further
        user (4) outside the group in the event that during a
25   predetermined time period (T) no user of the group has
        confirmed reception of the notification (301) by a
        receipt message (315).

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the subscription requests
30   selectively add and remove representations of users to and
     from the distribution list.

17. A computer program product (100) with program instructions
    for a processor (910) in a central computer (900), the
    central computer coupled to at least a peripheral computer
    (901/902) that executes at least one business application
5   (201/202), the peripheral computer issuing an alert message
    (211/212) when a current value of a predetermined variable
    in the business application is in a predetermined relation
    to a reference value, the central computer (900) for
    receiving the alert message, the computer program product
10 characterized in that the program instructions cause the
    processor of the central computer to execute the following:
    deriving(401) a group of users from a role-to-user
        assignment and from an application-to-role assignment,
        wherein the assignment defines the business application
15   that each user is allowed to access;
    storing (402) representations of the group of users in a
        message distribution list (140) and to receive (403)
        subscription requests to alert notification messages
        from the users of the group;
20 upon receiving (420) the alert message (211/212),
        forwarding (430) a notification message (301) to a
        plurality of communication devices (903, 904, 905) that
        present (440) a representation of the notification to
        the group of users (1, 2, 3); and
25 issuing (460) a further notification message to a further
        user (4) outside the group in the event that during a
        predetermined time period (T) no user of the group has
        confirmed reception of the notification (301) by a
        receipt message (315).

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18. A computer-readable medium (970) encoded with program
    instructions for a processor (910) in a central computer
    (900), the central computer coupled to at least a
    peripheral computer (901/902) that executes at least one
5   business application (201/202), the peripheral computer
    issuing an alert message (211/212) when a current value of
    a predetermined variable in the business application is in
    a predetermined relation to a reference value, the central
    computer for receiving the alert message, characterized in
10 that the program instructions cause the processor (910) of
    the central computer (900) to execute the following steps:
    deriving (401) a group of users (1, 2, 3) from a role-to-
        user assignment and/or from an application-to-role
        assignment, wherein the assignment defines the business
15   application that each user is allowed to access;
    storing (402) representations of the group of users in a
        message distribution list (140) and to receive (403)
        subscription requests to alert notification messages
        from the users of the group;
20 upon receiving (420) the alert message (211/212),
        forwarding (430) a notification message (301) to a
        plurality of communication devices (903, 904, 905) that
        present (440) a representation of the notification to
        the group of users (1, 2, 3); and
25 issuing (460) a further notification message to a further
        user (4) outside the group in the event that during a
        predetermined time period (T) no user of the group has
        confirmed reception of the notification (301) by a
        receipt message (315).
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19. A program signal (980) embodying the computer program
    product (100) and the method (400) of any of the above
    claims.